

Great Start Readiness Program - Income Eligibility August, 2008

On December 12, 2007 the President signed a bill reauthorizing the Head Start Program. Head Start grantees may serve up to 35 percent of their children from families with incomes of up to 130 percent of the poverty line.

Many of the Great Start Readiness Programs (GSRP) have begun to recruit and enroll children for the upcoming program year. GSRP income eligibility is 300 percent of the federal poverty line.

GSRP grantees are expected to collaborate with their local Head Start program to write local policy reflecting the federal change in income eligibility for Head Start. Discussion topics should include use of a common intake form, the process for referring families to the most appropriate program, and shared waiting lists between programs. For example, families applying for GSRP who fall between 100 and 130 percent of the federal poverty limit should fall lower on a priority list for enrollment into the GSRP. Those families may gain entrance into Head Start. Shared waiting lists will help to ensure that all eligible families are offered preschool programming.

There are early childhood partners in the state who have successfully developed strategies for communication and consensus on recruitment and enrollment. One example of this can be found in Midland County which has one intake agency that collects all preschool applications. A collaborative committee recommends preschool placement based on program criteria and parent choice. Head Start referrals are finalized before enrollment for each family. Slots are reserved for high-risk families which apply at the last minute. Agency resources are combined for conducting a county-wide "marketing blitz," and a unified message is presented to the community regarding the value of quality preschool.